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ABSTRACT

This paper, compiled for a class at St. Cloud State University, Minnesota, compares the job characteristics of traditional university library staff, who are most comfortable handling print material, with the job characteristics of university learning resource center staff, who handle all forms of instructional media including such nonprint materials as films, tapes, videotapes, records, videodiscs, and realia. Differences in service functions, education, duties, and competencies for the two types of librarian are discussed, with mention of a progression from one type of librarianship to the other. The development of learning resource center specialists from audiovisual librarianship is noted, and a list of seven competencies for school media specialists is provided. Acceptance or nonacceptance of new technologies in the field of librarianship, including computer technologies, is identified as the major area of contrast between traditional and learning resource center librarians. A 30-item bibliography concludes this paper. (Author/ESR)

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# Job Characteristics of the "Traditional" University Librarian versus the "Learning Resource Center" Librarian

A Research Report
Presented to
Dr. Fred Hill

In Fulfillment
of the Requirements for
IM 681

by
Mary M. Flekke

May 15, 1980

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## INTRODUCTION

Libraries, media centers, information centers, learning resource centers - call them what you will - have existed since the beginning of written history. The library format has changed much since the first clay tablet, but the idea is still the same, to disseminate information in the format best suited to the patron. The people who dispense information have generally been known as librarians, and the writer will continue to use this term for both the traditional librarian and the learning resource center librarian. The writer feels that no matter what materials format (print or non-print) is used to convey information, the purpose of the job is still the same and should accordingly retain the label of librarian.

The purpose of this paper is to contrast the job characteristics of the "traditional" university library staff and of the university "learning resource center" staff. During the researching of this paper, the writer found that there was not so much contrast between the two "types" of librarians as there was progression from one type to the other as technology advanced. The most significant contrast, consequently, is the acceptance, demonstrated by the two types of librarian, of the new technologies in the field. In the case of some librarians,

however, the philosophies of their institutions have simply forced them to retain the traditional beliefs and practices.

> The librarian of tomorrow, like the librarian of today and the librarian of yesterday, must be of his times, but must also partake of the traditions of his profession. These traditions may seem anachronistic and, mayhap, even useless. But they have endured for at least discussion purposes until now.[1]

The very traditions which we today label as archaic were once just as progressive and "outrageous" as we once, not so many years ago, labeled computers and videochips. In the early 1500's many serious book collections would not soil their shelves with books from the printing press. Today we talk about the end of the printed word and prophesy the day when we all have our own microreaders. When that day comes, the librarian and media person of the 1980's will be condemned to the role of the "traditional librarian." The above quotation, which spoke of library traditions, said that the librarian "must be of his times,"[2] defines the characteristics of not only the traditional librarian but of the present librarian and the future librarian.

Librarianship has been defined as "the collection, preservation, organization and use of recorded information."[3] Again this definition holds true for both types of librarians. The job of the traditional librarian as we define it in 1981, is to catalog, process and shelve the books in the collection. The traditional librarian also

usually cataloged periodicals, maps and pamphlets. Usually, anything that was paper fell under the domain of the traditional librarian. Other information formats such as 16mm or 8 mm films, tapes, videotapes, records, and realia fell under the care of the audiovisual director. The accepted practice was that "librarians and audiovisualists should cooperate but should not integrate their services."[4] There was a concession on the part of audiovisualists, however, since microfilm or microfiche was a print material on an audiovisual format, it was deemed part of the library. Even now, in the 1980's, some "separatists argue that every school should have separate audiovisual and library centers, or at least should have different people administering them."[5]

Learning resource center staff disagree with the separatists. They contend that "separate audiovisual, library, and textbook centers in the school are educationally confusing to the ultimate consumer, administratively unsold and financially uneconomical."[6] Learning resource center staff tend to believe that all formats should be combined under the title of instructional media. Instructional media is defined as "those things which are manipulated, seen, heard or talked about, plus the instruments which facilitate such activity."[7] The Learning resource center staff perceive their program as:

> ...that function which is concerned with the design, development, and

> analysis of instructional systems through the effective use of the most appropriate materials, both print and non-print and the accompanying technologies. It includes the selection, organization and evaluation of instructional media.[8]

The following little lyric should therefore, characterize the learning resource center librarians who provide the:

Right Material

for the

Right User

at the

Right Place

at the

Right Time to be used

in the

Right Way.[9]

SERVICE

The users of the library or media center often have a preconceived image of what the librarian should look lke and how they should behave;

> ...the unflattering stereotypeof the librarian as a "single, middle-aged woman with shell-rim glasses, ground gripper shoes, etc., etc." is a uniform. This unfavorable image,...is a factor in making the profession "visible"....[10]

This stereotypical female is also tradition bound in her daily behavior, and in some ways she always will be with us. Even in this age of technology some librarians will accept technology to a certain point and then stagnate, to be called some ten years from now - traditional.[11]

Both the traditional librarian and the media center librarian recognize that it is "the individual student who should be the greatest concern of any truly professional academic librarian."[12] However, the traditional librarian is "reluctant to move from the service function to the professed role as an integral part of the school's total program."[13] The service function provided by the traditional librarian has been enhanced by the learning resource center librarian. Not only is there a greater variety of tools available, but the learning resource librarian is a

> ...teacher working with other teachers as a team to provide the best possible experience for learners. He assists

> students and teachers in becoming intelligent users of learning resources in the center and in auxilliary areas.[14]

No matter what level the librarian is working on, be it elementary, secondary or college; it is the responsibility of the learning resource staff to work with the faculty in making the learning resource center a place which will facilitate learning. If the learning resource staff is involved in curriculum development, the media center should be accepted and well used. If, however, it is merely a place with useless books and a stereotypical "shh" librarian, the students will merely use the library as a place to sit and read their textbooks.[15]

A further extension of the service of the learning resource librarian is the fact that the learning resource service is not restricted to students and faculty of one particular institution. The traditional academic librarian saw a limited responsibility only to the institution at which the library was located. Learning resource staff, however, serve not only their own university or college, but also the surrounding community and other institutions who request their aid. Computers have made it possible for learning resource staff members to reach out to other institutions for a give and take of information - locally, statewide and even nationally.[16]

The fact that resource centers can share their holdings with each other frees the staff to concentrate on a more

widespread range of activities. The traditional librarian used to be tied to the technical processing of materials. Computer technology has made processing not only simpler, but has also made it possible to delegate many tasks to non-professional staff. That frees the professional staff for learning resource duties which might encompass such activities as:

> ...demonstrating instructional research methodology; conducting usage tours of the center; providing in-service workshops for faculty or students on the utilization of media and the production of free and inexpensive materials; and developing training programs for media paraprofessionals and professionals.[17]

Learning resource staff feel strongly about teaching media skills to students and faculty so that they are better able to help themselves in the library setting. This does not mean that the librarians want to help the patron as little as possible, but that the student who knows how to utilize the resource center learns more than the student whom the traditional librarian simply led to the book required instead of showing student how to find it.

## EDUCATION

Over the past twenty to thirty years the educational requirements of the library science field have been changing. The traditional librarian was once a separate entity who was trained to deal with print materials, and had a non-print colleague known as the audiovisual director. The learning resource person is both librarian and audiovisual director - hence the frequently used title, media person.

Since the end of World War II, the aim of library science education has shifted from specific to general.

> Special programs for children's librarians, catalogers, reference service, school library service, and so on, in which the student became "typed" not only in his own mind but through the process of placement and employment, have tended to disappear.[18]

The learning resource person's education is no longer typed; the learning resource person, once educated, should ideally be able to be employed in any phase of the media center.

> The disappearance of the specialized program in favor of the general program follows naturally from the increasing tendency in library education to minimize the techniques and skills in favor of a more philosophical and theoretical approach to librarianship.[10]

The traditional librarian's education usually consisted of an undergraduate degree with an extra year or fifth year devoted to library science.[20] The present day learning

resource center librarian still generally has the undergraduate degree, but the library science education consists of some sort of graduate work. This graduate work generally takes about two years depending on what school the librarian attends, and frequently the librarian already has another masters degree in another field. The exact length of time spent in graduate school depends on what school and what type of degree the student is seeking.

## DUTIES

Once the degree in Library Science or Library and Audiovisual Science has been obtained, the librarian has to find a job. The duties for this job depend on the type of librarian applying for the job and the job available. Eli Oboler suggests, "then and now, the major responsibility of the librarian was to be 'keeper of the books.'"[21] The traditional librarian very often was strictly that - keeper of the books - they were kept busy selecting and cataloging books, this left very little time to spend aiding students or working with other administrative details. The librarians frequently considered themselves so overworked that all non-print materials were left to the audiovisual directors. A common attitude of the traditional librarian was:

> I am so overworked now with just books and magazines that I cannot take on the additional responsibilities of audiovisual...

or

> I am so behind in my cataloging that I shall have to neglect nearly everything else until I am caught up.[22]

The traditional librarian, however, operated in the days when librarians did their own cataloging duties. The possibility of having secretaries or paraprofessionals catalog was beyond consideration. The librarians did their own housekeeping duties, it was often said of the

traditional librarians that they were "too fond of having everything in its place."[23]

The traditional librarian has sometimes been called the "responsive librarian" as opposed to the media center librarian who has been called an "active librarian."

> It is the aim of the "responsive librarian" to acquire as much as possible of the intellectual output of mankind, and then organize it so that it is readily accessible...the "responsive librarian" assumes that faculty members know all they need to about using a library, and that it is a faculty responsibility to motivate students to use the library. The "active librarian" is probably just as eager as the "responsive librarian" to collect and organize the intellectual output of mankind. But to him this is only incidental to an aim to make the library a dynamic element in the educational process. He assumes that the faculty does not know all that there is to know about using a library, that they are not fully familiar with the most current literature in their fields, and that the faculty probably needs help in motivating students to make the most effective use of the library.[24]

Dupay's so called "responsive" librarian is in actuality a a passive librarian who is

> ...devoted to housekeeping, to getting materials quickly and making them accessible with dispatch and efficiency, and to being available when needed for answering questions, compiling bibliographies or putting materials on reserve.[25]

The learning resource center librarian is an "active"

librarian.[26] They are concerned with making the library a viable study resource, not just a place to study, but one whose resources can be used for study. The librarian must be ready to

> ...embrace all forms of communication which transmit the educational or informational message....a sincere desire....to break out of the traditional book oriented patterns of the traditional library and to enfold all media.[27]

Louis Shores calls the different formats of media the "generic book - all of the media in all their physical form."[28] In dealing with the generic book, then, the learning resource center librarian differs from the traditional librarian because the learning resource librarians have the capability and capacity to review and work comfortably with a wider range of materials.

> It is precisely this capacity to review and select critically from among books, records, tapes, filmstrips, journals, maps, and prints, with an eye toward the needs of students and the goals of a humanistic, liberal, democratic education, that is the great potential contribution of the academic librarian.[29]

The needs of students, and of faculty are of more importance to the learning resource center librarian than they were to the traditional librarian. Librarians are often faculty members as well as teachers, whereas before they seldom were seen outside the library environment. Librarians must now "become involved with the long-range

planning process in order to help determine the direction of policies and planning for their institutions."[30]

The learning resource center librarians actively participate in curriculum planning and the selection of media to supplement the chosen curriculum. Another aid to the faculty and students is the tour given by the library staff of some learning resource centers to acquaint faculty and students with the learning resource center. These tours are specially valuable when the librarian is able to acquaint classes with sections of the center which are of special interest to the class content.

Learning resource center librarians also try to spend more time helping the center's patrons than on the technical work of the center. The learning resource center librarian must "be both a bookman and to coin a phrase, a people man."[31] (Book meaning the generic book, of course!) Unlike the traditional librarian, the learning resource staff do not feel called upon to be housekeepers. They are perfectly willing to let much of the technical processing be done by paraprofessionals, clericals and automated technology.[32] As paraprofessionals move into the library world and take over some of the time consuming processing work, the learning resource center librarian is freed to teach media skills classes, learn to handle new management systems, assimulate changing technologies, as well as being able to provide greater services for the needs of faculty and students.[33]

## COMPETENCIES

> The certification of professional media personnel by state agencies or their designated representatives is based upon the premise that the candidate for certification has achieved a required level of proficiency....What constitutes ...proficiency must be based upon the identification of those competencies necessary to guarantee accountable performance in the field.[34]

Over the years the certification and competencies required of librarians have been strengthened. In ancient times, librarians were little more than scribes, and even into the early twentieth century many states had little in the way of certification requirements. Many librarians in community libraries were volunteers interested in books and many college libraries were simply run by scholars who were interested in having a library available.

Library literature since the mid-1950's, however, has indicated that there has been an increased demand for a higher level of competency for academic librarians. The traditional librarian's academic preparation

> ...familiarized them with the four subjects that would be considered core courses in library science.... reference, followed by book selection, cataloging, and library administration.[35]

These four subjects were of course, learned by the librarians. The records, tapes, 16 mm and 8 mm films, filmstrips and videotapes were a part of the audiovisual realm and

librarians stayed as far from that as possible.

> Separationists argues that audiovisualists and librarians required different preparation and qualifications. Few individuals, it was felt could combine the two vast areas of specialization into one entity. A dual system, it was suggested, allowed each specialist to master his own area, to perform a "unique" function, and thereby offer a highly specialized service. Proponents of unity, on the other hand, argued that to maintain separate units for handling book and nonbook materials was neither logical or efficient.[36]

The learning resource center librarian does not agree with the separatist view. Resource center librarians believe that "teachers and pupils are best served by a single resource center...a unified, integrated instructional materials program."[37] Unlike the traditional librarian who was comfortable only with printed materials, the learning resource librarian must be able to deal competently with all media formats and the equipment needed to run them.

The traditional librarian and audiovisual director had rather limited competencies, each being familiar only with their own fields.

> ...a wide variety of competencies are needed by media professionals so that they may satisfy the demands placed upon the school media program. They need competencies derived from educational programs in general education, professional education and media specialization.[38]

The following list of seven competencies were written for school media specialists. They are directed to pre-college

education, but this writer feels that they apply to the academic librarian as well.

> 1. Relation of Media to Instructional Systems. Relating media to instructional systems is the ability to apply the principles of learning and learning theory by assisting individuals or groups in the pursuit of informational objectives.
>
> 2. Administration of Media Programs. Administration is the ability to develop and implement media programs which facilitate the achievement of educational goals, including the process of management of the media and human resources.
>
> 3. Selection of Media. The selection of media is the ability to apply basic principles of evaluating and selecting media to support the instructional program.
>
> 4. Utilization of Media. The utilization of media is the ability to assist faculty and students in the use of the school media program which enhances the learning process. A thorough knowledge of media is essential for promoting its effective use.
>
> 5. Production of Media. The production of media is the ability to plan, design, and produce materials to supplement those available through other channels.
>
> 6. Research and Evaluation. Research and evaluation are the ability to interpret and apply recorded research and evaluative data applicable to media programs, and to design and implement studies relative to the media center program when there is an identified need.
>
> 7. Leadership and Professionalism. Leadership and professionalism are the ability to conceive, synthesize, promote and direct media programs reflecting a commitment to professional ethics.[39]

These competencies serve to make librarianship a more demanding and more challenging career than it was for the traditional librarian. The librarian of the 1980's has a vast array of media to learn about, process, and dispense; no longer does the librarian exist who sits and stamps books all day!

## CONCLUSION

The contrast between the traditional librarian and the learning resource center librarian is not so great, especially if one calls the non-print materials by Louis Shores' term - generic book.[40] The difference between them can generally be attributed to advanced technology and a change of attitude. The advanced technology encompasses the newer forms of non-print media such as videotapes, videodiscs, tapes, and computers. The change in attitudes shows the traditional librarian who thought she/he was crucial to the processing of materials and the dissemination of information being replaced by the learning resource center librarian and the paraprofessional. The learning resource librarian counts the time spent imparting information to students as the more valuable occupation and considers the paraprofessional fully qualified to take over the processing and technical duties.

The service function - once considered to be helping students find the books they needed and stamping them - by the traditional librarian, is expanded to helping students and faculty find information, conducting tours of the resource center for classes and teaching media skills to both students and faculty either in regular classes or as individual instruction. Where librarians once assumed

teachers knew all about the library, librarians now assume that the teachers know as little as their students. Consequently, the librarians now view their own role as more viable and they also view it more confidently.

The role of the librarian changed with the change in education from specific to general. Librarians were no longer training to be children's librarians, catalogers, reference staff, etc.; they were beginning to train to work in all phases of the library and audiovisual profession. From two entities, librarian and audiovisualist, one emerged - the learning resource center librarian. After World War II, library science began to incorporate audiovisual science and educators finally saw the value of integrating the library and the audiovisual center. Also, it was found that the learning resource center was more economical and more educationally sound than separate entities.

Librarians now have at least one year of courses in the Library and Audiovisual Science field, where once they had little or no specific library education. These advanced education requirements have also given rise to more complex competency requirements, though those depend on the state and/or institution in which the librarian is seeking a job.

This writer feels that advances in technology have been responsible for the differences between the

traditional and the learning resource center librarian, and that the same technology will continue to put succeeding generations of librarians, media generalists, media specialists - call them what you will - in the "traditional librarian" category.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Eli M. Oboler, Ideas and the University Library: Essays of an Unorthodox Librarian (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977, p. 6.

[2]Ibid., p. 6.

[3]Encyclopedia of Librarianship (3rd ed.), p. 248.

[4]Louis Shores, Audiovisual Librarianship: the Crusade for Media Unity (1946-1969) (Littleton, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1973), p. 33.

[5]Ibid., p. 33.

[6]Ibid., p. 27.

[7]Barry Morris, "The Function of Media in the Public Schools," Audiovisual Instruction, 8 (Jan. 1963), p. 11.

[8]"Library Media Specialists" Perceptions of Their Roles and Functions," (Normal, Alabama: School of Library Media, Alabama A&M University, 1974), p. 1.

[9]David R. Bender, Learning Resources and the Instructional Program in Community Colleges, (Hamden, Connecticut: Library Professional Publications, 1980, p. 209.

[10]Perry D. Morrison, The Career of the Academic Librarian: A Study of the Social Origins, Educational Attainments, Vocational Experience, and Personality Characteristics of a Group of American Academic Librarians, (Chicago: American Library Association, 1969), p. 44.

[11]Oboler, p. 6.

[12]Morrison, p. 164.

[13]Cossette Kies, "Shifting School Relationships: How People React When Organizational Functions Change," Peabody Journal of Education, 55 (April, 1978), p. 182.

[14]Louis Bruno, Program for the Learning Resource Center, (Olympia, Washington: Office of Public Instruction, 1968) p. 9.

[15]Kies, Peabody Journal of Education, p. 178.

[16]Jerrold Orne, "Future Academic Library Administration - Whither or Whether," in The Academic Library: Essays in Honor of Guy R. Lyle, ed. by Evan Farber and Ruth Walling (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1974), pp. 91-92.

[17]Dwight F. Burlingame, Dennis C. Fields and Anthony C. Schulzetenberg, The College Learning Resource Center (Littleton, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1978), p. 145.

[18]Kenneth R. Shafer, "Personnel and the Library School," Library Trends, 3 (July, 1954), p. 18.

[19]Ibid., p. 18.

[20]Eugene H. Wilson, "Pre-Professional Background of Students in Library School," Library Quarterly, 8 (April, 1938), pp. 158-159.

[21]Oboler, p. 6.

[22]Shores, Audiovisual Librarianship, p. 60-61.

[23]Wayne Shirley, "An American Librarian's Heritage," in Challenges to Librarianship, ed. by Louis Shores (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company, 1953), p. 144.

[24]T. N. Dupay, Ferment in College Libraries: The Impact of Information Technology (Washington, D.C.: Communication Service Corporation, 1968), p. 28.

[25]Evan Ira Farber, "College Librarians and the University-Library Syndrome," in The Academic Library: Essays in Honor of Guy R. Lyle, ed. by Evan I. Farber and Ruth Walling (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1974), p. 17

[26]Dupay, p. 28.

[27]Ervin N. Nelson, "The Media Industry: Its Growth, Structure and Role in Education," School Library Journal, 16(7), p. 101.

[28]Shores, Audiovisual Librarianship, p. 130.

[29]Damon D. Hickey, "The Impact of Instructional Technology on the Future of Academic Librarianship," in Academic Libraries by the Year 2000: Essays Honoring Jerrold Orne, ed. by Herbert Poole (New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1977, p. 47.

[30]A. P. Marshall, "The Teaching/Learning Thing: Librarians as Educators," in Academic Libraries by the Year 2000: Essays Honoring Jerrold Orne, ed. by Herbert Poole (New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1977), p. 57.

[31]Oboler, p. 150

[32]Shores, Audiovisual Librarianship, p. 17

[33]Bender, Learning Resources, p. 59.

[34]David R. Bender, "School Media Personnel Certification Model," School Media Quarterly, 4 (Spring, 1976), p. 195.

[35]Elizabeth E. Matthews, Characteristics and Academic Preparation of Directors of Library-Learning Resource Centers in Selected Community Junior Colleges (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University, 1972), p. 4

[36]Burlingame, Fields, and Schulzetenberg, p. 28.

[37]Shores, Audiovisual Librarianship, p. 33

[38]David R. Bender, School Media Specialist Certification (Chicago: American Association of School Librarians, 1977), p. 1.

[39]Ibid., p. 6-7.

[40]Shores, Audiovisual Librarianship, p. 130.

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